

Please distribute the following testimony to members of the Judiciary Committee before start of the Public Hearing at 1 PM, 3/3/2014.

I strongly support the recommendations of the CT Sentencing Commission and passage of HB5221. Juveniles who commit serious offenses and who are sentenced to lengthy terms deserve an opportunity for a parole hearing after serving a significant portion of their prison time. Juvenile brains are incompletely developed biologically and mentally, leading to more impulsive behavior and less consideration of its consequences. As such, they should be allowed to demonstrate their rehabilitation, their remorse, and their suitability for parole. This law does not insure parole, but merely affords an opportunity for it.

I volunteer at MacDougall Correctional Institution and have come to know one young man who would be directly impacted by this law. Sentenced at 17, to 35 years in prison as an accessory to a homicide his cousin committed, he had now served 18 years of his sentence. During that time, he has studied, become a certified nursing assistant, and now cares for those in the prison hospice and medical clinics. On a daily basis he feels remorse for his part in the crime and considers the day, when the victim's father agreed that he deserved a second chance, a blessed event in his life. He regularly participates in meditation and is looked to by the other inmates as a source of compassion, kindness, restraint, and wisdom. He has maintained an ongoing weekly connection with his son, who was born shortly before his incarceration, and hopes to be a father outside of prison.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that brain science and mitigating factors be considered in juvenile sentencing. It is time for the state of Connecticut to follow suit. Those youths who have grown up in prison, recognized their responsibility for their crime, demonstrated remorse, and rehabilitated their lives need not occupy expensive jail cells when they could be contributing members of society.

Please pass HB5221

Respectfully
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